

The Calm Before the Storm

Steve Wake

The announcement of the General Election in the UK for June 8 came like a bolt out of the blue.

So now we have to see what happens with:

- Our Government.
- The Brexit Negotiation.
- The French election.
- Scotland. Wales. Northern Ireland.
- Gibraltar
- International terrorism.
- Climate Change.
- The money markets.
- US foreign policy.
- Russia.
- China
- Korea
- Pink Floyd.

If you do risk management then some or all of the above will be factors which will affect our daily lives. What we will be waking up to for the foreseeable future.

The world we live in looks like it's going to change and it could affect our prosperity by which I mean. Your job, your kids future. Where and how you live.

Now the good news is. Is hasn't happened yet. Although we don't quite know what yet. The bad news is that most of the institutions and sources of guidance which inform our opinions and choices don't know either.

The degree of uncertainty is unparalleled.

However, the sun will continue to rise and those of us with jobs will continue at least for a while.

It is safe to say that there will be projects. There always are. This profession is a good one to be in. Rain or shine.

So whilst we're waiting, now is a good time to reflect and rehearse what's coming and what we can do about it.

The PC manifesto (Project Controls) that is.

The Project Profession has to get and maintain its voice.

We the profession kid ourselves if we think that the first person the Prime Minister or members of the Government or those Civil Servants in Whitehall think of is us.

I direct this challenge at all you people in PMOs who think you're in charge and secure. You're not. You just generally hang around waiting to be told what to do. Like projects have always done. You think that keeping the house tidy and in order is what you need to do to succeed and be secure from harm.

Where is the drive, the creativity, the innovation, the flexibility, the usefulness?

What are you and your organizations doing to prove the case for what you do?

Where is your lobby to get you a seat on the Board and the rest of the Board and its investors educated about your value? Where is the evidence? The proof?

Project management, the topic as enshrined in BOKs around the globe is on an iceberg. An iceberg which is melting. This is because we have not proven our worth. Others are offering to do it better. Agile. Complex. Lean. Systems Theory. Astrology. And they are being listened to at our expense. And rightly so!

The reason why not everyone does project management is because generally it doesn't work like it should.

It needs something more.

But don't despair. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Add some water and make another baby. If you don't get close to the new ways of working you/we will lose out. We have to embrace evaluate and incorporate ideas which will improve. And bring more people in. Otherwise the iceberg will melt. And projects will be accomplished in some other way by some other people.

Project management needs to expand itself. Go into those areas which create success. It sure as hell is not more process.

Yet the lip service played to the challenges of climate change, sustainability, globalization, diversity is staggering in its hypocrisy. The well-paid well-educated saying it but not meaning it. Only happy to support so long as they come out on top. But with support that provides no real help at all.

Ironically these are often the same people who need to understand the value of project management. The very people who will do little to ensure that project management is encouraged to its rightful place of authority and influence.

There is a circularity here and I am perhaps unfairly pointing the finger at the elite. It's our fault we haven't made our case as well as we should. And it's our problem to fix. But time is ticking and things are not improving.

We have to become more demanding. Throw our weight around. Show we mean business to business both at home and abroad. Show we can improve lives. Show we can fix and improve. Show we know what we are saying actually works. Above all communicate this knowledge and these skills to many more than the paltry few thousands we number in our community today. By all means have PROFESSIONALS at the top of the tree but have the good sense to nurture the young up a clearly defined development ladder and in all corners of our society. Currently less than 10% of our profession is aged 16-34 and yet we keep getting told there are huge skill shortages. Millions are required. And what are we you or they really doing about it? Almost nothing! We have to own this problem because it's an opportunity - for us, our country and our children.

The skills we deploy as Project People are the skills that all can deploy in their daily lives. We all need to organize and plan. We all need to do it well. If we bring that knowledge and opportunity to the many they will have the necessary numbers equipped to deal with the many and uncertain challenges of the future.

And we cannot wait to be told how by someone else or wait to be invited.

Project people of the planet, go forth and multiply!

Amazingly, quite a few people do think about these challenges a lot. They are not superhuman. They are just like you only they got there earlier and may have saved you some time by considering the challenges and formulating some solutions or at least some pros and cons. A bit like the editorials in newspapers. Remember them?

And they are diverse and complex and hopeful and pessimistic. Above all they are engaged and want to change things for the good and the better. Join them. Whoever you think they are. But you can't do it on your own.

About the Author



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Steve Wake has worked in the print, automotive, aerospace, defence, insurance and IT industries as a project manager and consultant. He is an internationally acknowledged expert on Earned Value Project Management and has written and presented many times. He was chairman of the Board of the Association for Project Management in the UK steering it to Chartered status whilst pursuing a campaign of Listening, Learning and Leading as a way of being as well as doing Diversity properly.

Steve has also had to become an accomplished event organiser and chair with his own EVA conference in its 22nd year as well as continued close involvement in the high profile PMI UK Synergy events, both productions with a reputation for the unusual and innovative. His long passion for all kinds of music is almost matched by his continued appreciation of silence.

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